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**Background Paper 19**

**THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS:  
LABOUR MARKET PLANNING AND  
EDUCATIONAL LEAVE**

**D'Arcy Martin and Ian Curtin**

# **Skill Development Leave Task Force**

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Background Paper 19

**THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS:  
LABOUR MARKET PLANNING AND  
EDUCATIONAL LEAVE**

D'Arcy Martin and Ian Curtin

United Steelworkers of America

1983

This is one in a series of background papers prepared for the Task Force on Skill Development Leave. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Task Force or the Department of Employment and Immigration.



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PREPARED FOR THE T-1000  
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## Statement of Purpose

This report is in support of developing a process which will achieve a social consensus on an industrial strategy integrated with comprehensive and democratic labour market planning enshrining the promotion of full employment and greater equality as the major goals.

## The Purpose

First, to comment on the history of government action in the area of labour market planning and paid education leave.

Second, to examine the barriers which prevent women, young and older workers, minority groups, native people and handicapped workers access to current and future education and employment.

Third, to examine the extent and cause of the high level of illiteracy among Canadian workers.

Fourth, to examine the development of a dual labour market in Canada which remains unchallenged by government and business leaders and therefore continues to provide the basis for systemic discrimination and inequality.

Finally, to recommend a framework within which educational strategies can be developed which locate workers as the active subjects of social and economic change, and further, that creates a model for educational leave in which learning is flexible, lifelong and widely accessible.



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## Summary

At present, unemployment in our country has officially surpassed 1.6 million Canadians with a substantial number of workers not included in the official statistics who've given up looking for work. Over 4.5 million adult Canadians are functionally illiterate. Women continue to be segregated as secondary or surplus workers earning 58 per cent of the average annual male wage in 1982.

Such statistics indicate that systemic discrimination is continuing to bring about greater inequalities in the allocation of both educational and economic resources. "Quick fix" proposals on education and employment can no longer be considered an alternative to comprehensive and democratic long-term industrial and labour market planning which include labour as an equal party. The increasing inequalities between the primary, secondary and surplus work forces must be addressed through a process which will achieve a social consensus enshrining the promotion of full employment and greater equality as the major goals. Such a process should develop the basis upon which the government can enact legislation providing Paid Educational Leave for all Canadian workers for the purpose of general, social civic, vocational and labour education.. Jurisdictional disputes, in the field, between federal and provincial governments must be recognized as destructive to the goal of building a recurrent education system that links working with learning.

The federal government must now utilize the experience which is contained in the Adams and Allmand Reports, as well as the work of the Task Force in implementing those positive recommendations, particularly those dealing with

(iii)

the ILO Convention 140 on Paid Education Leave, literacy and pre-training, which will lead to economic recovery, increases in educational accessibility and enhancement of political democracy.



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ANNE PAXTON

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# I Our Points of Departure

Governments slowly respond to the demands of a modern and changing economy by allocating a growing volume of resources to vocational training. IFWEA accepts both the need and value of such provision, for the individual and for the community at large. However, any imbalance between the resources allocated to vocational training, and to the wider educational needs within society, will hinder the development of a more democratic, humane and just society.

International Charter of Worker Education<sup>1</sup>.

The labour movement in Ontario has a long history of involvement in developing the skills of working people -- as employees, as unionists and as citizens. This experience is the basis for our general stance on the issues addressed by the Task Force. We insist that educational strategies should locate workers as the active subjects of social and economic change, not as passive objects of a process imposed upon them. In particular, within the sphere of educational leave, we believe a model can evolve for learning that is flexible, lifelong and widely accessible. Large-scale investment in the curiosity, creativity and intelligence of working adults can sow the seeds for a more democratic and productive industrial life in this country.

The labour movement is presently called upon to react after the fact to a bewildering number of policy initiatives, from COPS to NEED, from AIB to 6 and 5. With limited staff resources, members buffeted by anti-labour legislation and a climate of economic pessimism, labour leaders are inclined to respond skeptically to government consultations.

2.

The Adams Report met only a few of labour's objectives on educational leave, and even these gains have remained on paper. Thus, another request for a comprehensive statement on educational leave is indeed a test of goodwill. Yet, a meeting of Ontario-based trade union educators on April 14th produced lively discussion on this question. The final draft of this study paper reflects their views as well as those of the two authors.

The terms of reference for the Task Force mention a "dynamic Canadian society". Certainly, working people in Ontario are experiencing rapid and profound shifts in their working and living environment. During the current depression, workplaces and communities have been jolted by a combination of cutbacks in production, reduced social services and accelerated technological change. The learning needs of workers in this climate include "retraining, updating and upgrading" of vocational skills, but require as well increased access to the information needed for effective citizenship.

Such resources are simply not provided by existing academic institutions. The O.E.C.D. Report on Education in Canada is one of several recent studies which indicate that our formal education system is less democratic, innovative and economically effective than most Canadians believe.



Federal government studies, particularly the Adams and Allmand Reports, have considered the learning needs of working adults. However, they have not been implemented to promote economic recovery, increase educational accessibility or enhance political democracy.

The most glaring example of government inaction has been the failure to ratify ILO Convention 140 on paid educational leave. There is a clear consensus among labour educators and active unionists in support of the Adams Report recommendation that Canada ratify this convention. Even though such ratification would not confer on all working people a legal right to educational leave, or guarantee salary continuation for those who take such leave, it would be a step in the right direction. Yet no action has been taken.

The same pattern emerges in regard to the Allmand Report recommendation that a campaign be undertaken against adult illiteracy. If anything, as we demonstrate below, government support for such a worthwhile initiative has dwindled since the Allmand Report.

Thus, the spirit of labour educators toward the Task Force is to urge "Do something this time." Specifically, we stress the importance of the Task Force putting aside "quick fix" proposals on education and employment, in favour of a comprehensive long-term planning process in which organized labour has its rightful place.

The current emphasis in manpower policy debates on shortages in specific skilled trades should not obscure the need for an overall industrial strategy and a commitment to full employment policies.

Unions that participated in the Major Projects Task Force can confirm that there is today no process for achieving a social consensus on economic goals that carries real clout in the political arena.

If consensus is to be achieved on educational leave, then those basic assumptions held by labour which are squeezed out of the present policy debate must be reinstated.

As the manufacturing base of Ontario's labour market deteriorates, it seems clear to us that workers need to learn about the economic and social options available to them individually and collectively. They need to develop a broad range of job skills so that the transition to an "information society" can be seen as a challenge rather than a threat. They need educational resources that strengthen their analysis, their sense of self-esteem and their effectiveness in contributing to economic and social development.

Educational resources, like economic resources, are unevenly distributed among regions and social classes in Ontario. Hence, many employees encounter barriers to democratic participation in shaping the



"dynamic Canadian society". If working people are not commodities, or factors of production, but rather citizens of a democracy, study opportunities must be broadened to assist them in overcoming such barriers. In other words, educational leave should remedy inequities in the way knowledge is produced and distributed.

Yet the issue is presented to us by management and academic participants in the debate as a narrow problem of matching job skills to available employment. If attitudes come in for any discussion, it often focuses on worker resistance to abandoning their communities in search of work.

In our courses, workers talk of their anxiety about job security. They explore the strains on family life as one breadwinner is offered a way out of unemployment if they can pressure their spouse into moving elsewhere. Single parents talk of the need for good daycare if they are to improve their job skills, their general education and the quality of their lives. These are real issues, as real as a shortage of pipefitters or computer programmers.

It is a real issue, too, that educational opportunities in Toronto are so much greater than those in Atikokan or Renfrew. Lawyers and doctors who have already benefited enormously from publicly-financed education continue to feed at the public trough while miners, prison guards

and secretaries are told that a legislated right to paid educational leave is beyond the financial capacity of governments and employers. Since when is a concern for equity sentimental, while concerns for productivity are realistic?

In this study, then, we will try to bridge some dichotomies: statistics and experiences, employment and citizenship, productivity and equity. Our bridge is the idea of effective participation in working life. This requires a willingness to democratize our economic and educational institutions. It requires the capacity to listen to working people, to respond to insights like these from a letter by a Steelworker in Hamilton to a union committee:

From the time a man is born, the basic item of control on his behaviour is intimidation. First, the enormous difference in physical size between he and his parents. Second, the hundreds of injections in the form of 'Don't talk back'. Then he encounters the institutional authority of teachers where the rule is, 'Raise your hand and wait to be recognized'. By the time he reaches the workplace, it's a miracle if he speaks at all....



## II The Changing Shape of Inequality in Education and Employment

Two simple statistics can provide a snapshot of the present situation in Canada's "just society". The first is that four and a half million Canadians are functionally illiterate. The second is that working women in Canada earn 58 percent of the male wage--an earnings gap of \$7,000 in 1982.

These two figures have very broad implications. How can we talk seriously about political and economic democracy in a country where 4.5 million people have no access to the written forms in which the key decisions are shaped? Their present marginalization, of course, will be further aggravated as employers continue to raise the educational requirements for hiring and advancement.

As well, the distance between male and female worker incomes creates tension in workplaces and homes. Over time, it has produced a significant social grouping of elderly women living below the poverty line -- fully 60 percent of the women in their age group.

These and other statistics remind us that systemic discrimination is alive and well in our country, in allocation of both educational and economic resources. Most working people do not need elaborate statistical charts to accept this statement at face value. Yet close analysis is needed if we are to probe the mechanisms of systemic discrimination, to grasp the potential and limits of educational leave as a democratizing instrument.

A discriminatory economic structure has remained unchallenged by business and government leaders and therefore continues to provide the basis for systemic discrimination. Perhaps the largest example of its operation is embodied in the development of a dual labour market in Canada which evolved to meet the needs of specific economic policies. (A more complete treatment of the development of dual markets is contained in Section IV).

While the basis and extent of the inequities between the two elements of the dual market have changed over time, (i.e. the primary and secondary labour forces), the net result of its development for working people has been an increase in competition for 'good jobs' as well as an increase in the forms of discrimination with which they must contend. With recent economic policies encouraging unbridled technological change and economic concentration, even more intense competition has arisen amongst workers who naturally wish to remain in the preferable but shrinking primary labour force. Those workers who must seek employment in the secondary labour market also must compete for scarce jobs in order to avoid becoming part of a growing 'surplus' work force (i.e. surplus to the average needs of the economy). Since there is no indication that new economic priorities focussing on full employment will be forthcoming in the future, competition will continue to intensify and an increase in discriminatory practices will likely accompany it.



A report by the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto

concludes that:

The roots of discriminatory practices and racism are to be found in the economic conditions of society. When job opportunities are scarce and there is a surplus pool of labour for employers to draw upon, employers can more readily use superficial criteria such as race, sex, age and ethnicity to select employees rather than using objective criteria of merit.

Credentialism is one of the simplest means of screening applicants for jobs which on the surface appears not to contravene provincial laws pertaining to discrimination. Employers simply utilize unnecessarily high educational requirements as prerequisites for employment.

However, such requirements have a particularly adverse effect on minority groups.

As Table I indicates, people of Italian, Portuguese and West Indian backgrounds in Metropolitan Toronto have average levels of education that are lower than majority Canadian and other groups. These workers who are disproportionately represented in the 'surplus work force' are excluded from the primary labour force by ever-rising educational and skill requirements, while at the same time unable to get access to training to reach the required levels. They are forced to compete for employment opportunities in the secondary work force.

TABLE I

AVERAGE YEARS OF EDUCATION: ETHNIC ORIGIN AND SEX, METROPOLITAN TORONTO  
1978-1979

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Majority Canadian	14.1	13.7	13.9
Chinese	14.1	13.7	13.9
German	14.1	13.1	13.4
Italian	8.2	8.2	8.2
Jewish	13.8	14.1	14.0
Portuguese	6.3	6.9	6.6
Ukrainian	12.4	11.6	12.0
West Indian	11.6	11.7	11.7
<hr/>			
Total	11.9	12.2	12.0

Source: Ethnic Pluralism Survey, unpublished



While it is difficult to prove the existence of this form of discrimination, it has been found that credentialism has little basis in terms of the real requirements of employment in the primary labour market. A study by the National Council on Welfare indicates that education and skill requirements for entry into jobs in the primary labour market are unrealistically high.<sup>2</sup> With regard to skill and experience qualifications, the Council report states:

For example, previous experience may be called for even though any competent person could learn the job in a few days, or a very specialized skill might be demanded although it's not used in the work. Even when the applicant is perfectly capable of doing the job, if he can't meet the inflated requirements, he won't get hired.<sup>3</sup>

In 1971, Rex Lucas studied the effects of credentialism on employment in mines, smelters, paper mills, textile mills, sawmills and fabricating plants in northern single-industry towns in Canada. He points out that while the content of the average job in these industries requires no more than basic literacy -- and older employees often lack even this -- employers have recently begun to demand proof of attainment of nine, ten or more years of schooling from prospective employees.<sup>4</sup>

A study carried out for the Ontario Economic Council found this same trend and concluded, "...formal language skills are a miniscule component of most jobs we have explored".<sup>5</sup>

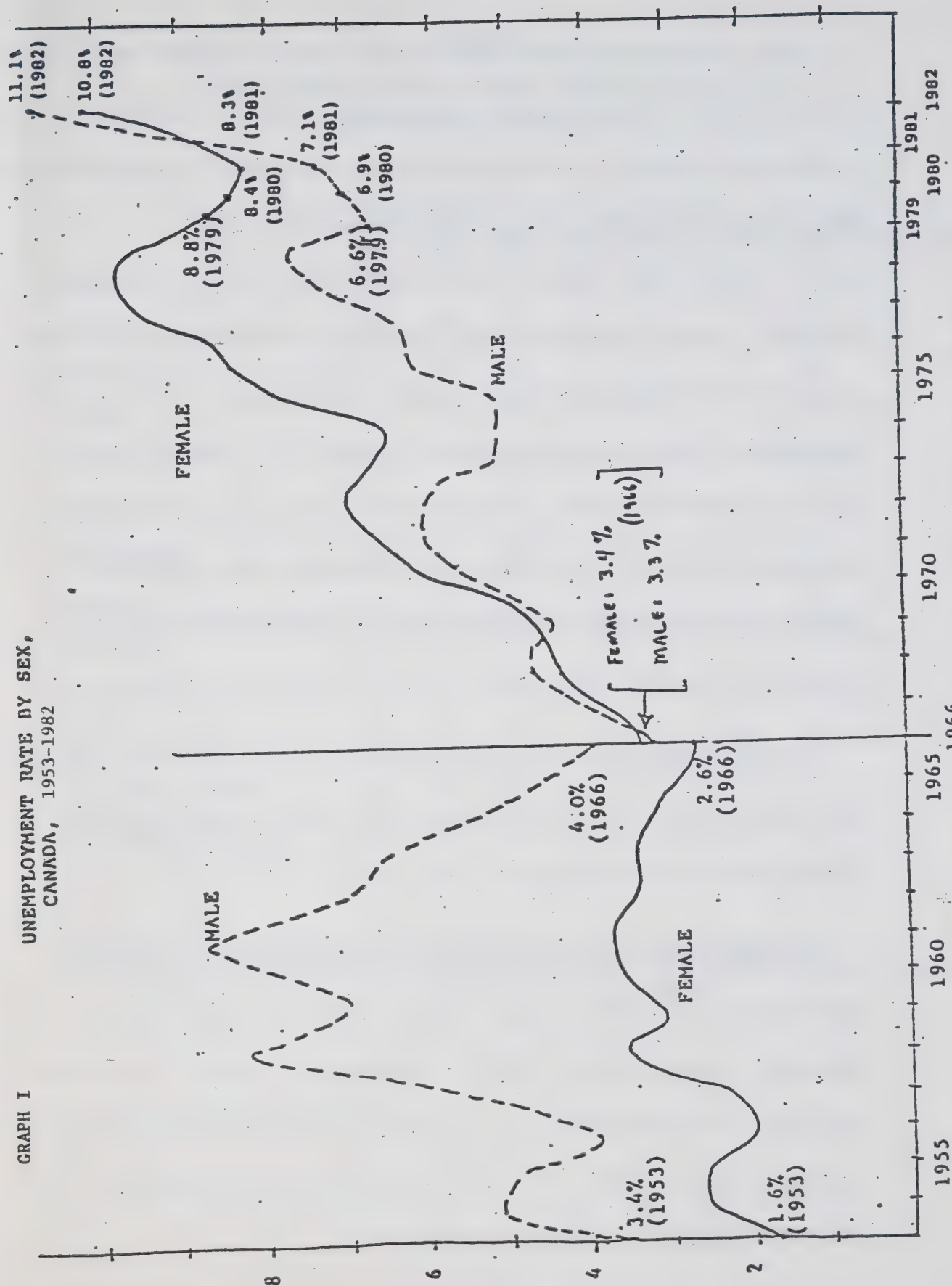
Beyond the maintenance of arbitrarily high, thus discriminatory, education and skill requirements for entry into better paying and more secure primary jobs, there is a second set of discriminatory practices based on sex, race, ethnic or cultural background and age which come into play when jobs are scarce. Barbara Thomas, of the Cross-Cultural Communications Centre, stated at a recent conference on Multiculturalism in the Workplace that:

Employers have maximum bargaining power with workers when there are a maximum number of people looking for jobs. They have even greater bargaining power when workers can be convinced that their differences are more important than what they have in common. ... When Vietnamese people are employed to cross legal picket lines, as they were in a strike at Perfect Hosiery Manufacturing in North York, it is pretty difficult for the persons - mainly Italian and Indian workers on the picket line, to remain clear on who the enemy is. When a Ku Klux Klan notice is posted on a company bulletin board, as it was at Anderson Metal during an organizing drive led mainly by black and Indian workers, racism is clearly being used as a weapon to confuse and divide workers. It is used to maintain the very unequal economic power employers already wield over workers... the very inequality that unions seek to redress. It is a tribute to working people when, in periods of great economic stress, they resist such efforts to divide them.

Evidence from the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) indicates the extent of workplace discrimination. Almost 40 per cent of all cases handled by OHRC during 1980/81 were on the grounds of racial or ethnic discrimination in employment.

The largest single group affected by discrimination is women. They are segregated into the secondary labour market with poor promotion opportunities.

GRAPH I  
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY SEX,  
CANADA, 1953-1982



Sources: 1953-66: Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, Dec. 1975, Cat. 71-001  
 1966-79: Statistics Canada, Historical Labour Force Statistics, 1979, Cat. 71-701  
 1980: Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, Dec. 1980, Cat. 71-001



In 1982, more than two-thirds of all female workers in Canada were concentrated in just four occupational categories — clerical, medicine and health service and teaching. In addition to their confinement in job ghettos, they also experience disproportionately high unemployment rates.

Graph I, which traces male and female unemployment rates for the period 1953-1982, clearly demonstrates that as female participation rates began to grow in the fifties and sixties, their unemployment rates rose faster than those of males, with the exception of 1982. The dramatic jump of male unemployment in 1982 is a result of job loss in the primary and manufacturing sectors; areas which are traditionally male dominated. However, when the economy re-emerges, female unemployment levels are expected to continue to dominate.

For those women who do find employment, the chances are much greater than for men that it will be part-time work. This represents another growing aspect of the secondary labour market.

The same factors which have served to create the above statistics also operate on minority groups. As with women, minorities tend to experience disproportionate rates of unemployment. Table 2 is a special tabulation of unemployment rates by mother tongue, age and sex for Metropolitan Toronto, in 1976. The data clearly reveals differences in rates of unemployment by all three groupings.

TABLE 2

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY MOTHER TONGUE, AGE AND SEX,  
METROPOLITAN TORONTO, 1976

	Age 15-24			Age 55-64			Age 65 or over		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
English	12	11	12	3	5	4	6	7	6
French	12	10	11	9	6	7	7	8	7
Chinese	16	13	15	8	11	9	8	7	8
Greek	10	10	10	5	8	6	5	7	6
Italian	10	7	8	6	6	6	4	6	5
Spanish	11	7	9	8	18	11	7	9	8
Portuguese	8	6	7	6	8	6	5	5	5
German	11	7	9	3	3	3	3	5	4
Ukrainian	16	9	13	4	5	5	5	6	5
Other Eastern European	14	13	13	4	5	5	5	7	6
Indo-Pakistani	13	20	17	11	40	13	9	15	12
All Mother Tongue	12	10	11	4	5	4	6	7	6
All Except English and French	11	10	10	5	6	5	5	7	6

Source: Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Employment, Working Paper #5,  
Working Papers for Full Employment: Social Policy Perspectives on Employment  
(Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto)

As the scarcity of employment opportunities grows it is an increasingly narrow group who have the prerequisite training and experience to meet rising employer demands. Both the young who represent the work force of tomorrow and the old who represent a vast body of experience are increasingly being discriminated against. For the young, a lack of experience often serves to bar entry into a shrinking labour market. Older workers are sometimes rejected by employers who think they will not provide sufficient returns on "training investments". The result is a tremendous waste of human resources.

The physically handicapped have one of the highest unemployment rates of all groups of Canadians able to work. Disabled persons are often thought of as being unable to perform productive work, and the construction of special facilities and the purchase of special equipment is seen as prohibitively expensive. The Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped published its report entitled "Obstacles". It contains many important recommendations pertaining to employment and education which the Allmand Report endorsed.

These patterns of discrimination, in learning and in working, result in enormous waste and widespread disaffection from the existing labour relations system. Visible and vigorous action is required to offset these longstanding injustices. Such action is supported by the labour movement and articulated in recent affirmative action and racism policies from the Ontario Federation of Labour. The time is ripe for government action, and the Task Force can play a role in ensuring that action get underway.



### III Economics and Illiteracy: Causes and Effects

Right action is ... ensuring that the technical changes which have made our culture more dependent on literate forms are matched by a proportionate increase in training for literacy in its full sense. It is obvious that we have allowed the technical changes to keep far ahead of the educational changes, and the reasons for this neglect, which in its own terms is so plainly foolish, lie in a combination of interest and inertia deeply rooted in the organization of society. An interpretation of the majority as a mob has served, paradoxically to still or weaken the most active consciences in this matter. Loutishness is always easy, and there can be few things more loutish than to turn, at the end of a long training, and sneer at those who are just entering on it and who, harassed and insecure, are making the inevitable mistakes.

Raymond Williams,  
Culture and Society, 1780-1950

The international movement for literacy recognizes grade VIII as the level necessary for functional literacy. Certain educational norms provide compelling reasons for its existence. For example, in Canada, the attainment of grade X education has become a prerequisite for most skilled jobs. With the inflation of certificates during the past decade, this level is likely to become even higher in the future. Those with less than grade VIII are, in fact, excluded from many areas of employment and skill training, regardless of their individual abilities. Further, if we assume 16 as the normal age for compulsory education, we assume at the same time a societal expectation that young people will pass through nine or ten years of schooling as a prerequisite for entering adult life.

Yet these expectations are not confirmed by the facts. Census figures indicate that in 1976 there were 1.4 million adult Canadians in Ontario who were well below this level. For Canada as a whole the figure was

4.5 million adult Canadians who had less than a grade VIII education and over 850,000 had, in fact, less than five years of education. The magnitude of these illiteracy statistics has virtually remained unchanged throughout the fifties, sixties and seventies.

Canadian illiteracy rates are significantly higher than those of other industrialized countries such as Great Britain and the United States.

The fact that a considerable portion of the Canadian adult population is seriously under-educated and many more are considered functionally illiterate has been used as an explanation for the extent of poverty in our society. Those who hold this view see illiteracy as the root problem. Up until 1976, government initiatives were built on the premise that educational upgrading, including literacy training, was a means of providing 'uplift' for the poor and of stimulating productivity and growth in Canada.

However, the elimination, in 1981, of federal initiatives in basic literacy training for those with reading abilities corresponding to grades I through IV, and the reduction of spaces for those with abilities equivalent to grades V through VII, indicates the government has rejected the assumption that literacy education is economically efficient. The February, 1983 issue of the Canadian Vocational Journal explains:

While the federal government is increasing the funding for basic educational upgrading courses when they lead to jobs, it is phasing down funding when they do not. At the same time, closer links are being forged between educational upgrading courses and skill training for occupations in demand.

The net result is that literacy programs don't seem to have any priority in a 'manpower' policy which increasingly responds to "occupations in demand" which, in reality, is simply the technological elite. Literacy education now appears to be defined as a problem of social welfare akin to the provision of subsidized housing, general welfare assistance or other benefits and services for the disadvantaged.

While there is substantial evidence that upgrading and literacy training don't eliminate poverty, government initiatives in this area have been cut, with little discussion of how illiteracy relates to other fundamental problems in Canadian labour market planning.

The development, or rather the uneven development of Canada's economy is paramount in the explanation of why unemployment continues to grow and why Canadian workers have persistently maintained high levels of illiteracy.





## IV Sectoral and Regional Development: The Basis of Inequality

Canada's economic activity has mainly been centred around extracting, transporting and selling raw materials to markets abroad and in turn importing goods manufactured in these countries.<sup>6</sup> The reliance on such policies has resulted in political and social conditions which favour such development and inhibit the growth of an industrial sector. Thus, Canada has been marked by uneven development of economic sectors with the overdevelopment of the primary resource extraction sector and the service sector, including trade, finance and transportation, and underdevelopment of the secondary processing and manufacturing sector. An important consequence of this has been continuing political and economic dependency on the major industrialized countries, particularly the United States.

Uneven sectoral development has also interacted with uneven regional development. With Canadian economic activity being essentially "hewers of wood and drawers of water", northern, eastern and western Canadian hinterlands have been locked into the role of suppliers of staples. The

development of local processing and manufacturing industries have been blocked by financial and political means. Perhaps the major example in Ontario is the lack of further processing facilities in the nickel industry. Specific exemptions from legislation requiring corporations to establish such facilities have been granted by the provincial government to two very large transnational corporations with operations in northern Ontario. Without stable and self-sufficient economic development the hinterland regions have tended to prosper during periods of intensive resource exploitation and to stagnate afterwards.<sup>7</sup>

These interacting patterns of sectoral and regional underdevelopment have retarded not only the economic prosperity of these regions, but also the development of education. Program proposals dealing with educational leave must take these realities into account if meaningful progress is to be achieved in raising educational levels in Canada.

In the normal course of economic development of western economies, industrialism has provided a spur to the growth of schooling by increasing the demand for skills in the labour force. Because of the weak position of the Canadian industrial sector, the stimulus has not been as strong in



Canada as in other western countries. As well, until the 1950's, the resource sector had not developed capital-intensive extraction techniques.

In the absence of these factors there has been little pressure on the government to keep pace with other industrialized countries in its efforts to modernize education. Thus, educational attainment levels in Canada have stagnated relative to more industrialized nations like the U.S. As well, because of the extraordinary reliance of Canada on labour-intensive techniques in its primary resource sector, an even larger number of immigrant labourers -- largely unschooled -- were drawn to Canada than to the U.S. in the pre-1950's period further lowering the average attainment level of Canadians relative to Americans.

By 1965, 42.4% of adult Canadians had only an elementary education or less, while 28.8% of Americans had this level of attainment.<sup>8</sup> It can be deduced that Canada was educationally, as well as economically, underdeveloped. The same relationship has obtained within Canada. The economic underdevelopment of Canadian hinterland areas in comparison to central Canada has been paralleled by the educational underdevelopment of those areas relative to central Canada.

Without a stable and self-sufficient economic pattern, Canadian hinterlands have lacked a provincial and local tax base sufficient to support the construction of a proper social infrastructure, including schools.<sup>9</sup> This has meant

that schools have been less numerous and of inferior quality in comparison with metropolitan areas. For example, there are only two universities serving northern Ontario, requiring many students to leave this region if they desire further specialized schooling. As well, owing to the nature of hinterland occupations, children in these areas have not been able to attend as regularly and as long. Without recourse to stable year-round employment, hinterland workers have been dependent on resource sector employment which is characterized by seasonal and "boom and bust" patterns of cyclical unemployment and economic hardship.

These and a variety of other factors stemming from uneven regional development in Canada have caused educational attainment levels of hinterland workers to stagnate, particularly among workers in primary resource occupations. This is confirmed in figures showing substantial inequalities in attainment across Canada. By 1951, 7.2% of all workers in Canada had grade IV education or less, while 43.5% had five to eight years of schooling.

Primary sector workers had much lower levels of attainment -- 14.3% had grade IV or less, and 62.5% had five to eight grades. By contrast, among workers in urban-based manufacturing 6% had grade IV or less, and 52.1% had grade V to VIII.

Regional disparities also appear in comparing educational attainment levels between provinces. For example, while 48.7% of Ontario adults had an elementary education or less in 1951, the figures for hinterland provinces included Saskatchewan 58.2%, Newfoundland 70.7% and Quebec 63.1%<sup>11</sup>

The same political path which resulted in the above statistics has gone unaltered to the present day. Since 1950 employment has shrunk rapidly in the primary extractive sector as rapid mechanization and economic concentration brought about severe distortions in the Canadian economy. In 1945, 30% of the work force was employed by the primary sector; by 1969, only 10%. Many jobs disappeared and for ones that remained, employers demanded higher educational levels than were possessed by a large part of the hinterland work force. As a result, a large, ill-educated and increasingly impoverished "surplus work force" emerged. Census figures from 1971 and 1976 continue to show the existence of low levels of educational attainment for this group. In particular, certain sub-groups disproportionately inhabit the "surplus" work force. Their rates of educational attainment are extremely low. For example,



native Indians in rural areas who have 8 years or fewer were 72.8%, Inuit in rural areas, 92.8%, French-speaking in Canada 54.9%, residents of Newfoundland, 49.4%, rural Manitoba, 48% and rural Saskatchewan, 44.4%.<sup>12</sup>

Many members of the ill-educated surplus work force moved to urban areas in search of employment.<sup>13</sup> They were joined by recent immigrants who had themselves been displaced from traditional forms of agriculture and subsistence activities. Like the internal migrants, a large proportion were unskilled and ill-educated.

These surplus workers found few openings in the traditionally high-pay urban manufacturing sector. However, jobs did become available in the 1950's and early 1960's in low-wage industries. It can be argued that the rapid development of the service sector (e.g. retail trade, banking, security services, hospital work, etc.) and low-wage manufacturing sectors (e.g. food processing, textile, the garment industry, etc.) was in a large part made possible by the availability of so many impoverished workers forced to accept employment on any terms.<sup>14</sup>

As the uneven development intensified between sectors, two distinct labour markets have developed. Primary workers compete for relatively high paying, secure, usually unionized jobs in capital-intensive "monopoly"

sector industries such as mining, automobiles, steel, petrochemicals, etc. Secondary workers compete for low-wage, non-unionized, insecure jobs in personal services and low-wage manufacturing. The two labour markets draw on two relatively separate and distinct labour pools and the barriers to movement between the two are high.

In this situation, workers and their organizations argue for a full employment policy based on a coherent industrial strategy. Only then do we have the basis for proper labour market planning, and hence for education geared to the personal, social and vocational needs of workers.





## V Recommendations

The central theme of this report is that policies for skill development leave can only evolve sensibly when labour market planning is a comprehensive and democratic process. On this basis, some specific trade union positions should be endorsed by the Task Force and recommended to government:

Recommendation 1. That the Federal Government follow through on the Adams Report recommendation that Canada ratify the ILO Convention 140 on paid educational leave;

Recommendation 2. That the government coordinate, with labour and business as equal parties, the development of a process which would achieve a social consensus on an industrial strategy integrated with comprehensive and democratic labour market planning enshrining the promotion of full employment and greater equality as the major goals;

Recommendation 3. That such a process set about developing the basis upon which the government will enact legislation providing Paid Educational Leave for all Canadian workers for the purpose of general, social, civic, vocational and labour education;

Recommendation 4. That labour and management education be conducted under the exclusive control of the respective parties. In addition, any legislation enacted by Parliament must not impede unions from negotiating PEL to fit their individual union needs;

Recommendation 5. That jurisdictional disputes, in this field, between federal and provincial governments be recognized as destructive to the goal of building a recurrent education system that links working with learning;

Recommendation 6. That in considering the plight of the unemployed in our country, the Task Force recommend to the government that they ensure a legislated entitlement to educational leave be independent of work history. Otherwise, many women, young and older workers, minority groups, native people and handicapped workers will not accumulate sufficient credits to benefit. Without such consideration, present discrimination in the allocation of educational resources will be aggregated rather than remedied;

Recommendation 7. That equity of access for women, young and older workers, minority groups, native people and handicapped workers to educational leave be ensured by the inclusion of equal opportunity in the legislation covering Paid Educational Leave, and further, that affirmative action programs, such as those described in the Ontario Federation of Labour's policies on Racism, Women and the Disabled, be established as the mechanism by which equal opportunity is implemented;

Recommendation 8. That government action be directed to moderate the polarizing impact of rapid technological change on the labour market and on the education system, to avoid widening the split between technocrats and techno-peasants;

Recommendation 9. That the social and economic conditions necessary for openness to learning be provided to Canadian workers by a government commitment to full employment for all those able to work and a guaranteed income for those unable to work. Such a climate of job and income security would allow the creative power of workers and unions to be applied properly to the opportunities skill development leave could provide;

Recommendation 10. That the Federal Government follow through on the Allmand Report recommendations pertaining to literacy and pre-training, and further, that excessive credentialism be recognized as a form of discrimination. The government should re-evaluate its own educational requirements for access to training programs as well as encouraging employers to do so.

# FOOTNOTES

1. International Federation of Worker Education Association, "International Charter of Worker Education:
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3. National Council on Welfare, op cit., p.23
4. Rex A. Lucas, Minetown, Milltown, Railtown, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).
5. Oswald Hall and Richard Carlton, Basic Skills at School and Work, Occasional Paper 1 (Toronto: Ontario Economic Council, 1977).
6. See R.T. Naylor, "The Rise and Fall of the Third Commercial Empire of the St.Lawrence" in Gary Teeple (ed.) Capitalism and the National Question in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).
7. Roy T. Bowles and Prudence Craib "Canada: Economy Opportunity and Class" in John Allan Fry (ed.) 'Economy Class and Social Reality' (Toronto: Butterworths, 1979), p.58.
8. Frank J. Whittingham, Educational Attainment of the Canadian Population and Labour Force: 1960-1965, Special Labour Force Studies, No.1, Ottawa: Queen's Printer (1966), p.18-19.



## Footnotes (cont.)

9. Wallace Clement, "A Political Economy of Regionalism in Canada" in Daniel Glenday et.al., Modernization and the Canadian State (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978, p.100.
10. Noah M. Maltz, Manpower in Canada - 1931 to 1961 (Ottawa: Department of Manpower and Immigration, 1969), p.221.
11. Daniel Kubat and David Thornton, A Statistical Profile of Canadian Society (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), p.130-132.
12. Gary Dickinson and Adrian Blunt, "The Undereducated of Canada" unpublished paper, University of British Columbia, 1977
13. See S.D. Clark, The New Urban Poor (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978), especially chap.7.
14. Clement, "Uneven Development" op.cit., p.93.

# Appendix I

## "Perceptions of Technological Change in Ontario Industry:

### Results of a Trade Union Survey"

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Report drafted by Ian Curtin, with the assistance of Kim Cameron and the Canadian Education Department, United Steelworkers of America.

April 21, 1983.





*People will adapt nicely to office systems if their arms are broken. We're in the twisting stage now.*

William F. Laughlin,  
I.B.M. Vice-President.

*American business in the 1980's has three choices:*

*Automate  
Emigrate  
Evaporate*

President of General Electric,  
quoted in Newsweek, Sept. 1982.

## INTRODUCTION

Canadians are experiencing technological change through home video and computer equipment, automatic bank tellers, communication equipment, etc., which to varying degrees represent potentially useful technological advancements. However, an increasing number of Canadian workers are also experiencing tech change through requirements to retrain, or they are losing their jobs altogether. This is particularly evident in the primary labour market where the number of jobs available are declining as investment continues to grow in capital-intensive production processes.

Even though there is evidence that employers have a considerable degree of latitude in the mixture of skill levels and technology available to them at the same level of efficiency and profitability, it appears that they elect to utilize processes which trim employment levels to the minimum required.

This survey on technological change is an attempt to understand the experiences of working people in relation to new technologies which demand major changes in their working environment. It is exploratory in nature in an attempt to point the way for future research undertaken to aid in the

development of policies which put a high priority on worker interests in the planning and implementation of technological change.

It investigates the incidence of technological change as well as the strength of contract language protecting workers' interests in the process of technological change in unionized establishments of the industrial sector of Ontario. The researchers believed that a significant amount of investment in capital-intensive production processes had either taken place or was in the planning phase. It was further hypothesized that the majority of workers were given little, if any, notice of impending technological changes and that their collective agreements contained either weak or no language which would protect workers' interests before, during and after such change occurred.

#### METHODOLOGY

The survey on technological change was carried out by the education department of the National Office of the United Steelworkers of America. It was conducted by means of a questionnaire handed out to all delegates at the union's District Six (Ontario) Conference in 1982.

In order to encourage a high and quick response, it was designed to be answered with a minimum amount of difficulty. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part I related to the Incidence of Technological Change (8 separate items) and Part II to the Incidence and Strength of Negotiated Language Related to Technological Change (10 separate items).

Information was solicited on the type and timing of technological change occurring in local unions represented at the conference, as well as the existence and strength of negotiated contract language pertaining to the implementation of technological change. Respondents were asked to identify their local union number, employer and plant location. The local union number enabled the researchers to gather further data pertaining to local union size and conference designation (i.e. type of industry).

The survey was done on a sample basis with the delegates present at the conference assumed to represent a significant cross-representation of the union's membership in District Six (Ontario). The union has 465 locals across Ontario representing approximately 80,000 members. It is the largest industrial union in Canada. Mining and basic steel are the biggest industries represented by the Steelworkers. The Steelworkers also have members employed in industries which produce metals, chemicals, electronics, plastics, paper, furniture, etc. While the majority of the membership are production and maintenance workers, a significant number work in office, technical and other white-collar occupations. Some retail employees and civic workers, especially in remote areas, are also Steelworkers.

Of the 285 delegates present at the conference, 135 returned completed questionnaires representing a 47.4 percent response rate.

In addition to the data and tables included in this report, the survey data may be organized according to major industry group, establishment size,



location and average earnings of workers, plus negotiated benefits. A thorough analysis of all aspects of the survey could not be completed in time for inclusion in this report. However, the data will be analyzed further in connection with the development of a more in-depth survey of worker concerns surrounding tech change.

The data in this report has certain characteristics which require comment. In Part I, respondents were asked for information on whether a particular type of technological change was already in operation, now being introduced or planned for the future. Those respondents who did not check any of the categories were assumed to not know whether technological change was occurring at their place of employment or that, in fact, there was none. In future surveys, more specific data would be an interesting area of research. In Part II, respondents were asked for information on whether contract language had been negotiated in various areas pertaining to technological change and how strong that language was. Those respondents who did not check any of the categories were assumed to not know whether any language existed in a particular category. (A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Figure I at the back of the report).

## RESULTS

5.

Table I presents the incidence of technological change by type.

Overall, 21 to 40 percent of respondents indicated that, with the exception of robots, some type of technological change was already in operation. The categories of 'Now Being Introduced' and 'Planned for the Future' had very low response rates for each type of tech change, ranging from 3.0 to 6.7 percent of the respondents, while between 52.6 and 91.1 percent either did not know whether technological change was planned or knew, in fact, that it wasn't.

TABLE I: THE INCIDENCE OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

	<u>Already in Operation</u>	<u>Now Being Introduced</u>	<u>Planned for Near Future</u>	<u>Don't Know or None</u>
	%			
Computer-aided Design	32.6	5.9	4.4	57.0
Word Processors	21.5	5.9	5.2	67.4
Video Display Terminals	40.0	3.0	4.4	52.6
Robots	3.0	0.7	5.2	91.1
Computerized Monitoring System	22.2	5.9	4.4	67.4
Automated Material Handling Systems	23.7	3.7	6.7	65.9
Automated Welding or Paint Spraying Systems	20.7	3.0	3.7	72.6
Other Computer-based Equipment and Work Process Changes	30.4	6.7	5.9	57.0

The most surprising result was the high incidence of video display terminals since the sample was considered to be largely from production and maintenance workers and this technology has been more closely linked with office work.

Table II presents the incidence and strength of negotiated language related to tech change. Overall, between 58.5 and 92.6 percent of respondents indicated they had weak or no language in the ten specific areas surveyed. The provisions where a larger number of respondents indicated they had okay or strong language included Job Security/Income Security, New Classifications/Reclassifications, Training/Retraining and Severance Pay/Termination Allowance. Between 15.6 to 28.1 percent of the respondents indicated they had 'okay language' in these categories, while only 0.7 to 5.9 percent indicated they had 'strong language'.



TABLE II: THE INCIDENCE AND STRENGTH OF NEGOTIATED CONTRACT  
LANGUAGE PERTAINING TO TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

	<u>No</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>Weak</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>O.K.</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>Strong</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>No</u> <u>Response</u>
	<hr/>		%	<hr/>	
Definition of Tech Change	72.6	17.0	7.4	0.7	2.2
Notice and Disclosure of Employer's Plans	61.5	14.1	11.9	2.2	10.4
Job Security/Income Security	43.7	25.2	20.0	3.7	7.4
New Classifications/ Reclassifications	38.5	20.0	28.1	5.9	7.4
Training/Retraining	45.2	29.6	15.6	5.9	3.7
Shorter Hours/No Pay Reduction	83.7	3.0	4.4	0.0	8.9
Severance Pay/Termination Allowance	62.2	10.4	15.6	0.7	11.1
Early Retirement	62.2	17.8	8.9	3.0	8.1
Special Provisions for Video Display Terminals (VDT's)	85.9	3.0	1.5	0.0	9.6
Joint Tech Change Committees	85.9	6.7	0.7	0.0	6.7

Joint Tech Change Committees and Special Provisions for VDT's were the two areas where respondents indicated they had the least negotiated protection, with 92.6 and 88.9 percent of respondents indicating they had weak or no language, respectively.

In analyzing the data further, the researchers performed cross-tabulations on a number of different variables. Table III shows the results of a cross-tabulation between the incidence of video display terminals (VDT's) and the

strength of special provisions for VDT's. The data shows that VDT's being introduced or planned for the future have some protective language being negotiated as opposed to almost none where VDT's already are in operation. However, the overall trend is towards weak or no language in this area.

TABLE III: CROSS-TABULATION OF THE INCIDENCE OF  
VIDEO DISPLAY TERMINALS (VDT'S) AND THE STRENGTH  
OF NEGOTIATED PROVISION FOR VDT's.

	<u>No</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>Weak</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>O.K.</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>Strong</u> <u>Language</u>	<u>No</u> <u>Response</u>
	<u>%</u>				
Already in Operation	81.5	3.7	3.7	0.0	11.1
Now Being Introduced	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Planned for Future	33.3	16.7	0.0	0.0	50.0
Don't Know or None	94.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6

Table IV presents a cross-tabulation between the strength of training/ retraining provisions and the incidence of automated material handling systems. The data is similar to other tech change cross-tabulations with training/ re-training in that stronger negotiated provisions also exist where respondents were actively in the process of technological change.

TABLE IV: CROSS-TABULATION OF THE INCIDENCE OF AUTOMATED  
MATERIAL HANDLING EQUIPMENT AND STRENGTH OF  
NEGOTIATED TRAINING/RETRAINING

	No	Weak	O.K.	Strong	No
	<u>Language</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Response</u>
			%		
Already in Operation	43.8	31.3	18.8	3.1	
Now Being Introduced	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	
Planned for Future	55.6	22.2	0.0	22.2	
Don't Know or None	46.1	29.2	14.6	5.6	

Forty percent of respondents indicated they had okay language as the technology was being introduced as opposed to 18.8 percent where the technology was already in operation. The pattern is consistent for all technologies except robots and automated welding or paint-spraying systems. (These two systems mainly involve the replacement of workers and so their trend towards weak or no language tends to confirm the existence of a pattern).

In comparing the overall results of TABLE IV with TABLE III it is clear that workers have had greater success in negotiating training/retraining provisions than special provisions such as health and safety protection for workers who use VDT's.



## DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the survey confirms that a significant amount of investment in capital-intensive production processes has already taken place. However, data related to planned investment in technological change reveals either that little investment is planned or that respondents were unaware of management plans for implementing tech change. It is suspected that the later conclusion is more likely, but more specific data is required to confirm such a trend.

While the type of technological change occurring in the respondents' workplaces were evenly spread amongst seven of the eight categories, the limited incidence of robotics was surprising in view of the extensive dialogue surrounding their use, vis-à-vis Japanese competition.

Data pertaining to the perception of respondents on the strength of contract language related to technological change revealed a general trend towards weak or no language. Certain areas, such as Job Security/Income Security, New Classifications/Reclassifications, Training/Retraining and Severance Pay/Termination Allowance in which the union has exercised significant leadership, reflect some gains. However, in the area of early retirement in which the union has also placed a great deal of energy, 80 percent of respondents indicated they had weak or no language. These results tend to indicate that the union has had greater success in areas which are of mutual

interest to employers and their workers (such as in training or classification) and less successful where significant monetary costs are involved (such as early retirement) or where workers are demanding greater involvement in the planning and implementation of technological change (such as definition of tech change, notification periods or joint tech change committees).





TECH CHANGE QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please fill this out before the workshop and hand to your workshop leader)

1. Are any of the following technologies in your workplace?

	Already in Operation	Now being Introduced	Planned for near future
- computer aided design			
- word processors			
- video display terminals			
- robots			
- computerized monitoring systems			
- automated material handling systems			
- automated welding or paint- spraying systems			
- other computer-based equipment and work process changes			

2. How strong is the language in your collective agreement on?

Issues	No Language	Weak	O.K.	Str
Definition of Tech Change				
Notice and Disclosure of employees plans				
Job Security/Income Security				
New Classifications/Reclassifications				
Training/Retraining				
Shorter Hours/No Pay Reduction				
Severance Pay/Termination Allowance				
Early Retirement				
Special provisions for video display terminals (VDT's)				
Joint Tech Change Committee				

Name: .....

Local Union #.....

Employer: .....

Location: .....



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